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KT photo | **Tim Bath**
Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor

House of Burgess: States clear Planned Parenthood

An effort to deprive Planned Parenthood Federation of America of federal funding failed in the Senate Monday

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

"Democrats blocked the bill on a procedural motion," reported Jackie Calmes of The New York Times. "The vote was 53 to 46, short of the 60 votes needed to proceed. Two Democrats voted with nearly every Republican to take up the measure."

Public funding amounts to $500 million of its $1.3 billion budget and finances services like testing for sexually transmitted infections, cancer screening, exams and birth control, not abortions. As I wrote in last week's column, "Planned attack on Planned Parenthood," this defunding attempt arrives in the firestorm ignited by the Center for Medical Progress.

July 14, the group released an 8-minute, deceptively edited version (titled "Planned Parenthood Uses Partial-Birth Abortions to Sell Baby Parts") of a 2 hour, 42 minute raw video of a conversation with senior director of medical services, Dr. Deborah Nucatola. The group posed as employees of "Biomax Procurement Services," a phony medical research firm and clandestinely recorded their conversations. As I read in the full 60-page transcript, the "$30 to $100" organ price quoted in the edited version was for transport costs, not monetary gain.

"In reality, $30 to $100 probably constitutes a loss for [Planned Parenthood]. The costs associated with collection, processing, storage, and inventory and records management for specimens are very high," wrote Sherilyn J. Sawyer, the director of Harvard University and Brigham and Women's Hospital's "biorepository," July

20 to Fact Check. “In the realm of tissues for research [it’s a] completely reasonable and normal fee.”

Truth aside, the pattern was set: release the desired meme first and then drop the tedious source material later. There are now three such pairs of edited/raw videos, with no end in sight.

Republican Gov. Mike Pence jumped on the bandwagon by joining a growing chorus calling for (ultimately fruitless) investigations.

“Pence on July 16 ordered an investigation of Planned Parenthood facilities in Indianapolis, Bloomington and Merrillville to see if organs from aborted fetuses were being sold,” reported The Associated Press Thursday. “The Indiana Department of Health said in a statement Thursday that an investigation found no evidence of any laws being broken.”

An identical situation unfolded in Massachusetts when state Rep. James J. Lyons Jr., R-Andover, called on authorities.

“Attorney General Maura Healey says her office has found no evidence that the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts is operating [a] fetal tissue donation program,” reported David Scharfenberg of the The Boston Globe July 29. “‘[They are] fully

compliant with state and federal laws regarding the disposition of fetal tissue,' Healey said in a statement."

Planned Parenthood itself has called for the National Institutes of Health to study the issue in the handful of states where it is available.

"Scientists have conducted fetal tissue research since the 1930s, and use the organs — from miscarriages and abortions — to seek treatment and cures for Alzheimer's, Down syndrome and other debilitating diseases," reported The AP July 29.

Center for Medical Progress head David Daleiden has said CMP has enough material to go on like this for months. Some of these thousands of hours of film may not see the light of day, at least not yet.

"A temporary restraining order has been issued preventing [CMP] from releasing any video of leaders of a California company that provides fetal tissue to researchers," reported Christine Armario of The AP July 29. "The Los Angeles Superior Court order ... prohibits the CMP from releasing any video of three high-ranking StemExpress officials taken at a restaurant in May. … The temporary restraining order issued July 28 will remain in place until a hearing on Aug. 19."

Whatever CMP releases or doesn’t release, remember: Those looking to deceive count on most people not seeking out the source material, even when it’s freely available.

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